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THE FAMILY OF RUGGLES

BY FRANCES COWLES

NEW YORK

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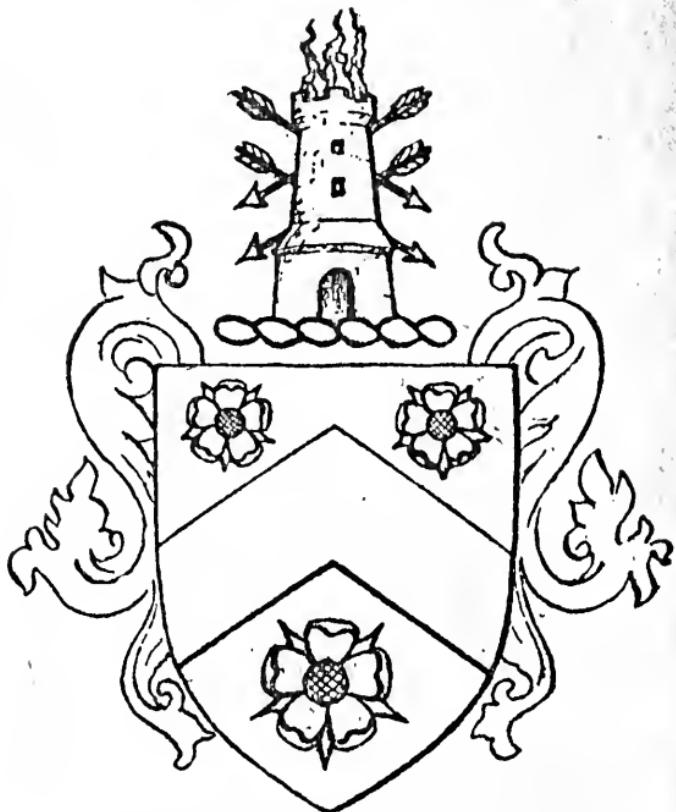
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R932 The family of Ruggles. N.Y. 1912.
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RUGGLES COAT ARMOR

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THE FAMILY OF RUGGLES



The Ruggles family had its rise in County Stafford, England, in the time of King Henry II, who ruled from 1154 to 1189. In the reign of Edward I, William De Ruggele of Stafford, an early bearer of this name, served his king with distinction in Flanders; and in the reigns of Edward III and his successors, Richard II and Henry IV, William De Ruggele's descendants, were lords of the manor of Hawkesbeard in the same county. From there the family spread to Chester, Warwick and Lincoln and afterward to Suffolk and Essex.

Several members of this Ruggles family of England were early settlers in America. George

Ruggles of Suffolk was an active worker in the settlement of Virginia, a member of the London Virginia company until his death in 1622. Samuel and George Ruggles, from Suffolk, went in the fleet with Governor Winthrop to Boston in 1630 and Thomas and John Ruggles from Essex followed in 1635 and 1637.

Almost every person in America of this name is descended from one of these immigrants, and the stock of the Ruggles family is represented in almost every state in the Union. Boston, Roxbury and Braintree (or Quincy) in Massachusetts and Pomfret and New Milford in Connecticut were the locations in which the Ruggles settlers were to be found in the seventeenth century and early in the eighteenth, and the records of those towns are filled with their official services in many lines of usefulness.

An interesting evidence of changed conditions in Massachusetts is witnessed by the Roxbury records of 1768, which show Joseph Ruggles to have been

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the owner of negro slaves. The names of two of these slaves are remarkable—Ishmael and Venus.

The Ruggles family never shirked its duty in times of war. The Indian wars, the Seven Years' war and the Revolutionary war found the family doing valiant service. General Timothy Ruggles of Hardwick was the ranking officer of American birth in the French and Indian war and was formally commended by Lord Amherst, the commander-in-chief. General Ruggles was president of the first colonial congress, held in New York in 1765, and had he espoused the cause of the colonies in the Revolutionary war his military career would have given him high command. But General Ruggles became the most noted Tory in Massachusetts, and raised and commanded a corps of royalists, known as the Gentlemen Volunteers, and was also a member of the royal mandamus council.

Six of General Timothy Ruggles' nephews, on the other hand, were officers in the army of Washington,

and when the British evacuated Boston and he went in their fleet to Nova Scotia, General Ruggles' wife refused to share his exile. His magnificent estate at Hardwick, modeled after an English manor, was confiscated. He had held the office of surveyor general of the king's forests, created as a reward for his military deeds in the French war, which was a position of great dignity and large revenue, the duties of which were nominal only; so it will be seen that General Ruggles sacrificed much for his loyalty to his king.

General Ruggles has many descendants in the Dominion of Canada, some of them among the most prominent families there.

After the Revolutionary war the Ruggles family was still active and prominent in national life. John Ruggles, known in his time as "Father of the Patent Office," was United States senator from Maine from 1834 to 1840; and Benjamin Ruggles had preceded him as a member of that body from Ohio in 1815,

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holding that office until 1833. Nathaniel Ruggles was, at the same time, a member of Congress from Massachusetts, and Charles H. Ruggles was a member of Congress from New York; Samuel B. Ruggles of New York, one of the originators of the Erie canal, was a prominent financier and philanthropist of his day and presented Gramercy park, still one of the attractive green spots in a busy part of the city, to the city of New York.

In the Civil war the Ruggles family was evenly divided between the armies of the Union and the Confederacy. In the service of the Union cause General George D. Ruggles from New York and General James M. Ruggles from Illinois went through the entire war. The Confederacy had General Daniel Ruggles from Virginia, a veteran officer of the Mexican and Indian wars, and his sons, and Francis Dunbar Ruggles of New Orleans, who fell at Fredericksburg, in the Battalion Washington Artillery.

The Ruggles family has kept up its reputation in England as well as in America. At the time of the American Civil war it was nearly extinct in England, but was represented by at least one brave and famous man—General John Ruggles, a seasoned soldier of the British army in India, who won his promotion in Bhutan in 1865.

From the Ruggles stock comes the Ruggles-Brise family of Spains Hall, Braintree, Essex, and Caven-dish Hall, Sudbury, Suffolk. The name Brise was taken from the maternal side of his house by some member of the Ruggles family.

The Ruggeley or Rugeley family is supposedly descended from the same remote ancestors as the Ruggles family. The prefix "de" found in the early names—as, for instance, William de.Ruggele—generally indicates that the name is taken from the name of some town or location. Hence it is supposed that both the Ruggles and Ruggeley families took their names from a market town in

Stafford called Rugeley. This town was situated on the road from London to Chester, a few miles from the town of Lichfield. In Anglo Saxon times this name probably indicated that the location was rough or rugged.

There were early settlers named Rugely in North America, and that family was represented in the Revolutionary war by Henry Rugely, who, like his very remote kinsman of the north, General Timothy Ruggles, was an adherent of the royalist cause. Henry Rugely has descendants in South Carolina.

The arms illustrated are those of Thomas Ruggles, esquire, of Sudbury, Suffolk, England, whose will is dated June 21, 1547, and who is the ancestor of both the American and English family of Ruggles. They are described: Argent between three roses a chevron gules. The crest is a tower or transfixed with four darts in saltier and inflamed proper.

FROM
HENRY STODDARD RUGGLES
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